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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 007685

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ECIN](#) [ENRG](#) [ETRD](#) [IZ](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTRY RAISES CONCERN ABOUT  
SECURITY FOR TRUCK DELIVERIES TO IRAQ

REF: A. A) ANKARA 7452

[1](#)B. B) ANKARA 07444

Classified by Econ Counselor Scot Marciel, for reasons 1.5  
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Akif Ayhan, MFA Head of Department for Economics, raised the Ministry's concern about security for Turkish truck drivers in Iraq and emphasized that the problem could lead to more truckers quitting or even another truckers' strike. Ayhan said U.S. military security for truck convoys was very important to the truckers, but they are objecting to being ordered to make deliveries to remote locations. (This discussion occurred prior to the events of the weekend of December 13-14, which resulted in the death of at least one Turkish driver.) END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Akif Ayhan, MFA Economics Department, told Econoff December 12 that Turkish truckers bringing goods to Iraq continue to complain that they are subject to unacceptable risks, and noted that the lack of security was one of the reasons for the recent truckers' strike (ref a). Ayhan added that the government is worried, that unless the truckers' concerns are allayed, many may choose to quit the deliveries or even organize another strike. He said that the commitment of the 101st in northern Iraq to provide security for the trucks was very important and emphasized that truckers expected protection along the entire route in and out of Iraq. Ayhan said the government has been working with Turkish truckers' associations to explain the situation in Iraq and to encourage the drivers to form convoys to make the security job easier for the U.S. military escorts.

[1](#)3. (SBU) A growing concern, according to Ayhan, is that truckers are frequently ordered to make deliveries to remote locations beyond the major tank farms in Mosul, Kirkuk and Dohuk, where they cannot be adequately protected. Ayhan urged that this should not be considered the responsibility of the Turkish drivers. Turkish convoys should be required to deliver to central depots or tank farms only; final delivery to substations of retail outlets should be the responsibility of SOMO or domestic companies. Ayhan questioned whether the contracts specified this requirement, but added that even if this is clearly in the contracts, truckers might refuse to continue deliveries to Iraq if this is considered part of the job.

[1](#)4. (C) Ayhan added that the GOT was pleased that weekly coordination talks have commenced at the border. He said that this is the appropriate venue to discuss implementation of recent agreements between Turkey and Iraq. However, he argued that certain issues required the direct control of central government authorities. For example, Iraqi authorities at the border impose discretionary fee increases, which anger drivers and cause disruptions at the border. He added his hope that expected Iraqis customs legislation would clearly settle this issue. He also objected to the use of 'Kurdistan' seals by Iraqi border officials.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Econoff raised the continuing delays at Habur Gate and said that we expected both sides to live up to their commitment as part of the bilateral agreement of December 2 (ref b) to increase processing to 1,850 trucks per day. Ayhan confirmed that Turkey is committed to improving processing, adding that Turkey wanted to move forward with construction of the second crossing. He quickly pointed out that his government was not making any connection between the two issues.

[1](#)6. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.  
EDELMAN